

# Chapter 50

## Aircraft Operations

**AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS** Refer to RMG 50 (91-4)

### **Mobilization**

Between the hours of 2200 and 0500 charter pilots shall not be dispatched. Orders for charter aircraft should not be placed with vendors between these hours, unless the vendors have a separate dispatcher available. Operators should be queried to insure duty limitations are being met.

### **Ordering Procedures**

### **Aerial Fire Detection**

All requests for aerial detection within the Casper Interagency Dispatch area for ongoing incidents or after thunderstorms, should originate from the Zone/District FMOs/FOSs and be placed through the Dispatch Center. Coordination and prioritization will occur in the event that more than one unit requests a flight. The dispatcher will initiate procedures to acquire the appropriate aircraft from either Forest Service agreements or OAS source lists. The Dispatch Center will establish the flight following process in accordance with the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book).

### **Air Tankers and Lead Planes**

All air tanker, lead plane and smokejumper requests will be placed through the Dispatch Center. The acquisition of aircraft will follow agency guidelines. All requests for tactical aircraft will be filled on a first come, first served basis unless multiple incidents require the establishment of priorities. In such an instance, the Dispatch Center Manager will consult with the local Multi-Agency Coordination Group. Until that meeting can occur, priorities will be established in accordance with policies and procedures set forth in the National Mobilization Guide. Aerial retardant drops will be used only when authorized by the agency with jurisdictional responsibility.

### **Helicopters**

All requests for helicopters and helitack crews will be placed through the Dispatch Center with dispatching done according to agency guidelines. Flight following will be conducted through the Dispatch Center.

**Prioritizing Incidents** Refer to RMG 50 (93-32)

**Aircraft Demobilization** Refer to RMG 50 (93-39), NMG 50 (Pg. 64)

**Flight Management Procedures** Refer to specific Unit Aviation Plans, NMG 50 (Pg. 64)  
Administrative Point-to-Point flights: All Agency contract, lease, charter, or owned aircraft, fixed and rotor wing, shall file and open an FAA flight plan for every administrative (point-to-point) flight mission flown for the benefit of the Agency.

Mission Flights/Special Use: All mission flights (tactical fire flights) shall file a flight plan with CPC who will ensure flight following procedures are followed. Mission flights will be documented using ROSS or the resource order form. Special Use Flights are generally resource oriented flights and will require a Project Aviation Safety Plan and a Flight Request Form (9400-1a). The aviation plan needs to be submitted to the Agency Aviation Officer for approval and signatures.

For all point-to-point flights a Flight Request Form will be filled out.

Flight following procedures for aircraft flying non point-to-point require a status check at 15-minute intervals. This can be accomplished utilizing Automated Flight Following (AFF) or by radio check-ins.

The following information should be documented at each 15 minute interval:

- Time of check in.
- Current position of aircraft (Latitude/Longitude and geographic landmark if known).
- Direction of travel (unless orbiting or consistently working in one area).
- Any changes in flight plan or status.

Prior to any flight, the aircraft dispatcher should have a full understanding of the purpose of the mission, destination, duration, persons on board, check-in intervals, communication networks, and emergency procedures in the event of an accident/mishap. The aircraft dispatcher and pilot must agree to which method of flight following will take place (AFF with 15 or 30 min "ops normal" radio check-ins/strictly radio check-ins). Pilots must monitor at least one predetermined radio frequency as an alternate means of flight following in the event the AFF system fails in the aircraft or in dispatch, or in case dispatch needs to cancel a mission, divert the aircraft to a higher priority incident, or relay other critical information regarding hazardous weather, TFRs, etc. Regardless of AFF being used, radio communications must be maintained with all aircraft which the dispatcher has agreed to flight follow. If radio communications cannot be maintained through the duration of the flight, the flight will be immediately terminated and the dispatch office contacted. The exception to this is, if the lack of communications is temporary and there are mitigation measures in place. For instance if the aircraft is working in a known radio dead zone and the pilot/manager and dispatch have agreed that at predetermined intervals, not to exceed 30 minutes, the aircraft will return to an area with radio coverage and check-in as well as AFF is positively maintained.. For flights crossing dispatch area boundaries and when the aircraft has flown out of radio contact, the dispatch center area it has flown into will be contacted and the aircraft "handed off". The flight will not be closed out with CPC until it is confirmed that another dispatch center has radio communications with the aircraft.

Refer to the Airspace Boundary Plan contained in the Unit Aviation Plan for flights taking place in the common corridor along dispatch boundaries.

## Point-to-Point Flight Following

The sending dispatch center has the ultimate responsibility for flight following. This responsibility may be handed off to RMACC for fire mobilization flights. If the flight was originated by CPC then the Chief of Party/Flight Manager or pilot will notify CPC of any delays and upon arrival at the final destination (unless the flight following has been handed off to RMACC).

**Automated Flight Following (AFF) Requirements & Procedures** Refer to RMG 50 (97-26)

**Aircraft Accident/Incident Reporting** Refer to RMG 50 (98-1)

All accidents and incidents will be reported immediately to the Dispatch Center and appropriate line officers. Emergency procedures will be followed as outlined in the Aircraft Incident/Accident Response Guide. SAFECOMs need to be filed by persons that observed or were involved with the incident. A copy of the SAFECOM will be provided to the Unit Aviation Officer.

**Overdue and Missing Aircraft** Refer to RMG 50 (98-4)

**Airborne Thermal Infrared (IR) Fire Mapping** Refer to RMG 50 (98-8), NMG 50 (Pg. 73)

## Lead Planes

A lead plane, Air Attack, or airtanker coordinator is required for the following missions:

- Two or more airtankers will be over the incident at the same time or at staggered intervals of 15 minutes or less
- Any mission where the airtanker pilot is not IA rated
- The fire is in a congested area
- Wherever any airtanker is operating over an incident within 30 minutes prior to official sunset of the nearest airtanker base
- Wherever any airtanker is operating over an incident within 30 minutes after official sunrise of the nearest airtanker base

If a lead plane is not available, a qualified Air Tactical Group Supervisor may be used until a lead plane arrives, as long as the airtanker Pilot-In-Charge (PIC) is IA rated. Non-IA rated PIC's require a lead plane.

Refer to section 24.6.2 of the RMG - Aerial Supervision Requirements in the Rocky Mountain Area Matrix for additional guidance.

**Aerial Supervision Modules (ASM1)** Refer to RMG 50 (102-34)

**Aerial Supervision Requirements** Refer to RMG 50 (103-17)

**Air Tactical and Reconnaissance Aircraft** Refer to RMG 50 (106-10)

**Exclusive Use Contract Helicopters** Refer to RMG 50 (107-1), NMG 50 (Pg. 73)

All initial attack requests State Helicopter will be placed with Casper Interagency Dispatch., CPC will be responsible for flight following the State Ship at all times (unless handed off to another Dispatch Center or flight following local), this includes project work, fires, and re-positioning.

1 All orders for the helicopter will be placed with Casper Dispatch. Individual overhead orders  
2 for any members of the module will be placed with Casper Dispatch. The helicopter will be  
3 mobilized with the module, chase truck, and fuel truck unless different instructions are  
4 specified at the time of the order.

5  
6 Orders for project work will be coordinated with the Helicopter Manager prior to ordering  
7 through Casper Dispatch.  
8

9 **Helicopter – Call When Needed (CWN)** Refer to RMG 50 (108-1)

10 All CWN helicopters will be ordered through CPC. If the CWN is for fire suppression the  
11 order will then be placed with RMACC. If it is for a non-fire incident, CPC in conjunction with  
12 the unit aviation manager will utilize the OAS source list or USFS rental agreements and  
13 obtain an appropriate aircraft for the mission.  
14

15 When a CWN helicopter is used, it must have appropriate level of supervision depending on  
16 size and mission. A qualified Helicopter Manager or Project Manager must inspect the  
17 aircraft prior to use.  
18

19 Modules are not automatically ordered by RMACC when a helicopter order is filled by a CWN  
20 aircraft. CPC dispatchers need to order the module upon notification that a CWN is filling  
21 the order. The module is ordered on an Overhead order and cross-referenced with the  
22 Aircraft order.  
23

24 Refer to the appropriate agency aviation plan for guidance concerning use of aircraft for non-  
25 fire flights and projects.  
26

27 **High Desert District** sponsors a Type 3 Helicopter located in Rawlins, WY. It is available to  
28 the units within the Casper Interagency Dispatch area. Orders for the helicopter will be  
29 placed through the Casper Interagency Dispatch Center which will then be placed directly  
30 with Rawlins Interagency Dispatch Center.  
31

32 **Wyoming State Forestry** sponsors a Type 3 Helicopter located outside of Casper, WY.  
33 Orders for the helicopter will be placed to the Casper Interagency Dispatch Center. Units  
34 using this helicopter need to be aware that if a higher priority fire occurs on State and/or  
35 private land anywhere within the State of Wyoming the State Duty Officer may require it to  
36 be released off of the incident to respond to the State/private land incident.  
37

38 **Large Transport Aircraft** Refer to RMG 50 (111-30)

39 **Passenger/Cargo Manifest** Refer to RMG 50 (111-36)

40 **Airtanker Dispatch** Refer to RMG 50 (112-1), NMG 50 (Pg. 69)

41 **Airtanker Use in Optional and Post Season Periods** Refer to NMG 50 (Pg. 69)

42 **Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS)** Refer to RMG 50 (114-20)

43 **Single Engine Airtankers (SEATS)** Refer to RMG 50 (115-1), NMG 50 (Pg.71), and the SEAT  
44 Operations Guide for general policy and guidelines.  
45  
46

## **Tanker/Retardant/SEAT Bases**

Three fixed Retardant Bases are managed by neighboring Dispatch Centers. These bases are available to reload heavy airtankers for incidents within the CPC area:

- Billings Tanker Base, managed by Billings Interagency Dispatch Center
- West Yellowstone, managed by Bozeman Interagency Dispatch Center
- Rapid City Tanker Base, managed by Great Plains Interagency Dispatch Center
- Jeffco Tanker Base, managed by Fort Collins Interagency Dispatch Center

SEAT bases are located at Greybull, Worland and Riverton within the Cody Dispatch Zone. Other SEAT bases around the state include but are not limited to Casper, Gillette and Rawlins. Those dispatch centers will need to be contacted for activation. Contact the BLM duty officer for activation of the Greybull, Worland, or Riverton SEAT base.

## **Mobile Retardant**

The BLM has a mobile retardant trailer that can be set up at any airport with a runway length greater than 5000 ft. and a single weight axle threshold of over 16,500 lbs. Contact the BLM duty officer for activation. Departure time from Worland is 30 minutes from the time of notification.

## **Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) (FAR 91.137) Refer to RMG 50 (118-1)**

All TFR's will be ordered through Casper Interagency Dispatch Center and then CPC will place them with RMACC. It is important that after the need for a TFR no longer exists, that CPC is notified so that the TFR can be released.

## **Military Training Routes (MTR) and Special Use Airspace (SUA) Refer to RMG 50 (119-1), NMG 50**

**Airspace Conflicts** Refer to RMG 50 (119-35), NMG 50 (Pg.76)

**FAA Temporary Airport Control Tower Operations** Refer to RMG 50 (120-1), NMG 50 (Pg. 76)

**Dedicated Radio Frequencies and Management** Refer to RMG 50 (120-27), NMG 50 (Pg. 77)

## **Frequency Management**

Federal and State Land Management Agencies agree to the sharing of specific radio frequencies that are authorized/licensed for each agency. Shared frequencies are to provide efficient, cost effective radio/communication support in protecting life and property. The sharing of frequencies is under the authority of the NTIA Regulations Manual, Sections 7.3.1, 7.3.4, and 7.5.1 and the FCC Rules and Regulations, Part 90, Sections 90.405 and 90.407. Refer to the specific County Annual Operating Plan for the shared frequencies within the CPC zone.

**Interagency Interim Flight & Duty Limitations** Refer to RMG 50 (121-34)